United Nations A/C.4/52/SR.12

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

Distr.: General
25 November 1997

Original: English

Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 12th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 November 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Mounkhou (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Mongolia)

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In the absence of Mr. Mapuranga (Zimbabwe), Mr. Mounkhou (Mongolia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 85: International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space *(continued)* (A/52/20 and A/52/307)

1. **Mr. Hodgkins** (United States of America) said that the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies (Outer Space Treaty) had established the principle of freedom of exploration and use of outer space by all States and created a legal framework which promoted international space cooperation among developed and developing countries. His delegation believed that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) should continue to be concerned exclusively with promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space and that the First Committee of the General Assembly and the Conference on Disarmament were the competent multilateral forums for consideration of the disarmament aspects of outer space.

2. COPUOS had played a crucial role in advancing space cooperation and provided a unique opportunity for the exchange of information among developed and developing countries; it had achieved rapid progress in the development of international law relating to outer space. His delegation underscored the need to improve the methods of work of COPUOS if it was to function effectively as an advocate for space cooperation within the United Nations system.

3. In the past, his delegation had expressed deep concern about the record of under-utilization of conference services by COPUOS and its subcommittees. At the fortieth session, however, there had been a near-total reversal of that situation, due in large part to a series of reform measures suggested by his delegation and others over the past 10 years, measures which had revitalized the work of COPUOS and its subcommittees and had been used as models for similar efforts in other United Nations bodies. Those measures had led to a reduction in conference-servicing costs from $2.6 million to $1.5 million per biennium. At the same time, COPUOS had done more with less; new items had been added to its agenda which had strengthened the scientific content of COPUOS and moved it away from politically contentious issues such as disarmament.

4. His delegation supported the decision by COPUOS to organize the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) as a special session rather than a global conference, so as to remain within the existing resources of COPUOS and its secretariat, whose activities would be curtailed during the year of the session. Participants at UNISPACE III would consider how the use and exploration of outer space could have a positive impact on the daily lives of people around the world and contribute to scientific knowledge.

5. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Chile) said that the Latin American countries, and specifically Chile, had played an important role in developing a legal framework that took special account of the needs, aspirations and legitimate expectations of the developing countries. The owners of space technology were a privileged group of countries, but the potential beneficiaries were all of mankind. On the basis of the relevant treaties and principles, the Latin American countries had sought to obtain the maximum benefits from modern technologies, whose impact on the economic and social development of the peoples was very far-reaching. The relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Outer Space Treaty and the Agreement Governing the Activities of States on the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies made it clear that the exploration and exploitation of outer space must be carried out for the benefit of all the world's peoples, whatever their level of scientific and economic development. In view of the enormous benefits of the application of space technologies in such areas as natural resources, the environment, telecommunications, disarmament and confidence-building measures, the international community had a legitimate right of access to data which were of crucial importance to it. The globalization of the modern world had led to the emergence of global strategic threats, which must be dealt with from a global standpoint with international cooperation playing a decisive role. The Outer Space Treaty clearly established the need for the cooperative use of technology. His delegation strongly supported the work of the Legal Subcommittee and was opposed to setting aside any of the contentious items on its agenda.

6. The Declaration on International Cooperation in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space for the Benefit and in the Interests of All States, taking into Particular Account the Needs of Developing Countries, should serve as a basis for possible mechanisms of international cooperation in which satellite information played an important role. However, the Declaration should be transformed into a solemn declaration by the General Assembly, so as to ensure proper legal and political follow-up. In addition, there should be a review of various matters, including the principles of remote sensing. His delegation supported the decision to include in the agenda of the Legal Committee an item on the review of the

status of the five international legal instruments governing outer space.

7. At the regional level, the action carried out by the countries of the Americas, including the United States of America and Canada, had resulted in three space conferences of the Americas. The most recent had taken place in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in 1996 and had adopted a plan of action which, like that of the second conference, had given a clear mandate to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and other regional bodies to assist in the implementation of the plan and other projects, something which, unfortunately, had not yet happened.

8. He drew attention to his Government's decision to host a United Nations regional meeting on space technology and applications for development for Latin America and the Caribbean in October 1998, in preparation for UNISPACE III, and emphasized that space technology, if properly used, could help solve urgent economic problems and combat poverty, thereby strengthening democracy and establishing full respect for human rights.

9. The establishment in Chile of a working group made up of universities and other national institutions had made it possible to identify the needs for space technology in various regions of the country. International cooperation would also be needed. Chile was already receiving support from the International Space University in Strasbourg and was preparing to sign an agreement with Canada. His Government attached great importance to astronomy, and the many international observatories in Chile provided special opportunities for research stemming from Chile's privileged geographical location. His Government was conducting an appraisal for the early establishment of a national space agency, for which it would need extensive international cooperation.

10. **Mr. Dumitriu** (Romania) supported the statement made by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union and also expressed his satisfaction with the negotiations on the proposal concerning the methods of work of the Committee and its subsidiary organs. Those proposals reconciled the problem of ensuring both equitable representation and efficacy because members had shown the necessary political will to initiate reform. Reform and change were possible even if it meant that some States would have to abandon their positions of privilege.

11. His delegation had always supported the establishment of United Nations regional centres for the teaching of space science and technology and, in that context, reiterated its support for the relevant recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 50/27. The link to the United Nations gave those centres greater visibility and made possible greater cooperation with national and international institutions working in the field of outer space questions. His delegation was pleased to note the discussions which had been undertaken by Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey on the creation of a network of teaching centres for the countries of central, eastern and south-eastern Europe. It was to be hoped that experts from the countries in question would cooperate with the Office for Outer Space Affairs to define the role of those establishments, their technical needs, their methods of operation and the financing of the network. Assistance from other countries, as was already the case with Italy, would be more than welcome.

12. Space technology offered great potential for the implementation of Agenda 21. He encouraged the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee to continue to make remote sensing from space a priority, especially the use of remote sensing systems for environmental monitoring. Access to remote sensing data and analysed information for all countries at reasonable cost remained extremely important. The sharing of meteorological data by the World Meteorological Organization provided a good example of such practices. The Cossini spacecraft provided a further such example, the United States having provided the Secretary-General with timely information as to how other countries could obtain the results of the environmental assessment made by that spacecraft, which was equipped with a nuclear power source. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's work in the areas of modelling the space debris environment and the evaluation of risks was also important. He noted with satisfaction the progress made in national and international space activities concerning the planetary environment, especially the international geosphere-biosphere programme (global change).

13. The work of the Legal Subcommittee had changed greatly since the signing of the Outer Space Treaty. Outer space law was now at the forefront of international law, having developed greatly during the cold war. The Legal Subcommittee would continue to play an important role in ensuring that legal standards reflected the rapid changes in space technology and the organization of space activities. In order to remain effective, however, it must accept that there were some questions which, despite endless debates, would never be resolved, and in that regard it needed to display more realism and pragmatism, thereby proving itself capable of reform in reality, not simply in appearance. The same was true of COPUOS.

14. **Mr. Parnohadiningrat** (Indonesia) said that the fundamental changes on the international scene had renewed hopes and aspirations for a new world order based on peace,

equity and justice and also provided opportunities for enhancing international cooperation in all areas, including outer space activities. Space science and technology could be used as an invaluable tool for resolving the problems facing mankind: the population explosion, with its associated problems of poverty, environmental degradation, dwindling energy resources and growing expectations worldwide for a better life. His delegation had always been committed to the development of space for the purposes of sustainable growth and the use of space science to support national development. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space played a central role in promoting and enhancing international cooperation in developing the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of all countries, in particular the developing nations.

15. It was gratifying that the Working Group of the Whole of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had been reconvened to review progress in implementing the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). That Committee had submitted realistic and useful recommendations, in particular the preparation of technical reports by the Office for Outer Space Affairs on preparatory activities for the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III). His Government attached great importance to the work of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in organizing workshops, training courses and seminars to assist developing countries in their national programmes. However, owing to financial constraints, the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had not been fully implemented, and it was to be hoped that the developed nations would make a greater contribution to existing programmes and initiate new ones to show their commitment to promoting cooperation and to sharing knowledge and expertise with the rest of the world.

16. The Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's theme for 1997, namely, "Space systems for direct broadcasting and global information systems for space research", had been most pertinent owing to the enhanced importance of the revolution in space communication. His delegation also supported the new theme for 1998 entitled "Scientific and technical aspects and applications of space-based meteorology", which would provide opportunities to discuss how practical applications of such technologies could alleviate the impact of climate change, particularly in developing countries. He hoped that the holding of a symposium based on the recommendations of the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and the International Astronomical Federation (IAF) would yield worthwhile results at the next session of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee.

17. His delegation considered that the use of the geostationary orbit, which was of fundamental importance to all States, should be based on a legal regime *sui generis* to ensure rational and equitable use for the benefit of all mankind, taking into account the special needs of the developing countries and the preferential rights of the equatorial countries. COPUOS was the most appropriate body to elaborate such a regime, and the International Telecommunication Union was the appropriate body to deal with the technical aspects.

18. His delegation supported the inclusion in the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee of an item entitled "Review of the status of the five international legal instruments governing outer space". COPUOS should also consider establishing a mechanism to coordinate its work with the Conference on Disarmament to prevent an arms race in outer space.

19. Enhanced international cooperation would provide an opportunity to use the spin-off benefits of space technology to tackle important issues relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, including peacekeeping and humanitarian activities. Those benefits had already helped to establish new techniques in areas such as population studies, national economic development planning, natural disaster forecasts and family welfare programmes and were of importance to the world as a whole.

20. UNISPACE III should accord priority to promoting international cooperation in the field of space science and advanced technology and address future trends in such technology and their impact on promoting environmentally sound and sustainable development. Its recommendations should address four important issues: research activities designed to enable nations to cope with certain situations, particularly climate conditions which aggravated natural disasters; adoption of a global approach in researching critical space issues and the enhancement of national, regional and international space information centres; the urgent need to lend support and assistance to developing countries in building national infrastructures for space centres and promoting access to other information centres; and the promotion of human resources development in third world nations with a view to making space applications a meaningful part of their national development priorities.

21. **Mr. Gao Feng** (China) said that he welcomed the growing international cooperation in space activities, which gave greater scope for peaceful uses of outer space and involved more countries in the applications of space

technology. The United Nations Programme on Space Applications had made a useful contribution by promoting and coordinating space activities. His Government, which consistently encouraged international cooperation in the field on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, complementarity and joint development, had concluded many intergovernmental cooperation agreements with both developing and developed countries, and China's scientists and astronomical industry had entered into technical cooperation and trade agreements with many countries regarding the manufacture and launching of satellites, manned space flights and applications of space technology. With a view to promoting the capacity of developing countries to engage in space activities, China provided scholarships for training in remote sensing and had joint projects with Brazil, Pakistan, Korea and Thailand.

22. As part of its continuing progress in the field of astronautics, China had set up a complete space system encompassing research, production and testing and had established centres capable of launching various kinds of satellites and a matching network of monitoring stations. The Long March series of rockets was capable of launching near-Earth orbiting, Sun-synchronous and geostationary satellites, and a considerable number of launches had taken place in recent months, yielding both social and economic benefits in their applications. China was now ranked among the world leaders in a number of important areas of space technology, which it had incorporated into its overall national development strategy.

23. COPUOS and its Scientific and Technical Subcommittee, serving respectively as the Preparatory Committee and Advisory Committee for UNISPACE III, had made commendable progress in the preparations for the Conference. The recommendations and programme of action eventually adopted by the Conference would have to include effective measures to realize the agreed objectives, especially by promoting the utilization and development of space technology in developing countries. That would be the key to the success of UNISPACE III.

24. His delegation supported the reform measures put forward in the COPUOS Chairman's package proposal concerning that Committee's working methods. It should be borne in mind, however, that the purpose of reform was not merely to enhance equitable geographical representation but also to strengthen the role of COPUOS and increase its efficiency so that it could meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

25. **Mr. Abdul Khalid** (Malaysia) expressed his satisfaction at the changes to the COPUOS Bureau, which marked a positive departure from the cold-war arrangement. The Committee had contributed substantially to the promotion of international cooperation in space exploration and technology. He was encouraged that special attention had been given to space applications for environmentally sound and sustainable development based on Agenda 21. COPUOS must ensure that outer space was maintained for peaceful purposes, and to that end Member States must provide every assistance to COPUOS as it further developed international space law and strengthened international cooperation for the peaceful exploration and uses of outer space. His Government was reviewing its involvement with the five major outer space treaties with a view to formulating national space law. It emphasized the importance of transparency in outer space activities, exchange of data, and equitable sharing of the benefits of outer space between developed and developing countries.

26. It would not be right to delete the subject of geostationary orbits from the agenda of the Legal Subcommittee, as had been attempted, since such action would remove the issue from the United Nations forum. That issue continued to be of special interest to developing countries, especially Malaysia and other equatorial countries, for which access to and equitable utilization of the orbit were of great concern. Much remained to be done to devise special legal principles and rules relating to the use of geostationary orbits within the International Telecommunication Union's broad guidelines of efficient and economic use and equitable access.

27. The hazards posed by space debris continued to be a priority issue and steps should be taken to limit such debris as radically as possible. All future satellites or spacecraft should incorporate technology which minimized debris and there should be a means of verifying that that had been done. In addition, all future satellites should possess a built-in capability to leave outer space after expiration of their lifespan. The burden of cleaning up debris already littering outer space lay largely with the major players and, although further study would be welcome, concrete action was necessary.

28. **Mr. Pérez-Otermin** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR) and Bolivia and Chile, emphasized the importance of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee's work in the areas of space debris, the use of nuclear power sources and the organization of UNISPACE III.

29. With regard to the work of the Legal Subcommittee, he supported the inclusion of the new agenda item entitled "Review of the status of the five international legal

instruments governing outer space" and the continued study of the scientific and technical aspects of the use of nuclear energy sources, and he urged Member States to answer the questionnaire on the definition and delimitation of the geostationary orbit.

30. The end of the cold war and the East-West conflict had led to increased cooperation in space activities, not only between developed and developing countries but also between States with existing space programmes. UNISPACE III held out the promise of new joint undertakings. In the spirit of greater cooperation in the peaceful exploitation of outer space amongst the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government of Chile had offered to host a regional preparatory conference for UNISPACE III from 12 to 16 October 1998 in Santiago. The conference would provide an opportunity to enhance exchanges of experience and information at the regional level and contribute greatly to UNISPACE III.

31. The Third Space Conference of the Americas, held in November 1996 in Punta del Este, Uruguay, had made great progress in the areas of regional cooperation and the use of space technology for sustainable development, the environment and education, and would make an important contribution to UNISPACE III. The outer space activities of the MERCOSUR countries and of Bolivia and Chile were founded on the principle of international cooperation, which implied the participation of several States, each making its contribution to the joint activity while meeting its own outer space objectives. Such collaborative activities were entirely peaceful and were aimed above all at meeting the needs of their peoples.

32. **Mr. Shinde** (India), after observing that COPUOS had made good progress in the preparations for UNISPACE III, said that the Conference should prove significant in meeting the challenge of developing space technology and using it to ensure improved living standards for all, better protection of the environment and a global partnership for sustainable development. In addition, the status of the five international treaties governing outer space needed review, and COPUOS had rightly recommended the introduction of a new agenda item in that regard.

33. Among his country's latest accomplishments in the development of space technology and its utilization for peaceful purposes, his delegation cited the sixth in a series of state-of-the-art remote sensing satellites, the IRS-1D, which was equipped to produce advanced imagery and had been launched by India's indigenously developed polar satellite launch vehicle into Sun-synchronous orbit. In addition, India was currently developing the capability to launch satellites into geostationary orbit. Data and services from the IRS-1D were being made available to users across the globe, and his Government was developing sophisticated satellite missions for emerging new applications. It had also made considerable progress in satellite communications, with the national satellite, INSAT-2E, scheduled for launch in 1998.

34. India was also promoting international cooperation in the field of space education, through the Centre for Space Science and Technology Education for Asia and the Pacific, which had been operating in India since 1995 and had imparted skills and knowledge to students, professors and scientists in selected areas of space science and technology aimed at social and economic development.

35. Space systems were being used successfully in a variety of applications. While striving to move into new areas of technology development and utilization, his Government maintained that the emphasis needed to be placed on bringing the benefits to those at the grass-roots level. It was therefore important that all States, particularly those in the developing world, should have the capacity to assimilate technological breakthroughs that would further their people's welfare and national development. In such an ever-expanding space frontier, new ways of cooperation were a necessity.

36. **The Chairman** said that the draft resolution under agenda item 85, which members had had before them in an unedited version since the beginning of the week, would be issued the following day in final form as document A/C.4/52/L.8. He suggested that members should agree to waive the 24-hour requirement for the submission of proposals and amendments under rule 120 of the rules of procedure and that the Committee should take action on it at the next meeting, after it had concluded its general debate on the item.

37. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.